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Congresswoman Betty McCollum
Statement for the Record
Honoring Vice President Walter Mondale on his decoration by the
Government of Japan
February 26, 2009

Betty McCollum
Minnesota 4th

Ms. MCCOLLUM: Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize former Vice President Walter Mondale as he receives the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Paulownia Flowers from the Government of Japan. This prestigious decoration is the highest honor given to foreign civilians by the Japanese government and is being bestowed to Vice President Mondale for his contribution to enhancing friendship and mutual understanding between Japan and the United States as U.S. Ambassador to Japan from 1993 to 1996.

No public servant is more deserving of this honor than my friend and fellow Minnesotan Walter Mondale. For five decades, Minnesotans have supported the man they warmly call "Fritz" as he served as Vice President of the United States under President Carter, Minnesota's U.S. Senator from 1964 to 1976, and State Attorney General. His contributions in areas including education, social justice and international human rights have forever changed Minnesota, our nation and the world.

Walter Mondale's career in public service is distinguished, however, not by the greatness of his titles, but by the goodness of his heart. He used his positions of authority to tirelessly promote cross-cultural understanding, economic justice and civil rights. While his accomplishments are many, his greatest legacy may be the model of principled and diligent public service that continues to inspire America and fill Minnesotans with quiet pride.

Madame Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me and all Minnesotans in congratulating Vice President Mondale on this distinct and much-deserved honor.